بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

يا أيها الذين آمنوا إذا لقيتم فئة فاثبتوا واذكروا الله كثيرا لعلكم تفلحون

THE QUR’AN AND COMBAT

Imam Mahmoud Muhammad Shaltut

MABDA
English Monograph Series — Book No. 18

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واذكروا الله كثيرا لعلكم تفلحون

O ye who believe! When ye meet an army, hold firm and think of Allah much, that ye may be successful.

Qur'an,
Al-Anfal, 8:45

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THE QUR'AN AND COMBAT

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1893–1963

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Contents

Preface

Thanks be to God, and peace be upon His Messenger, Muhammad, who was sent by God as a mercy to all mankind. God Revealed the Holy Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad to clarify all things; it prescribes for humanity correct doctrine and high morality and shows us how to organize our relations amongst each other in a manner that wards off tyranny and preserves rights.

This is a study of combat (*qitaal*) gleaned from the Holy Qur'an; it is from a series of lectures I delivered on Egyptian radio. I wished to present it again in written form so that people may read it and benefit and so that, if they are so inclined, people may also offer their opinions on the matter.

In the introduction I include what I see as the ideal approach to Qur'anic exegesis. I also discuss the reason that drove me to choose this subject in particular.

The research discusses the following subjects: the nature of the call to Islam (*da'wah*); the Holy Qur'an and the legitimacy of combat; the Holy Qur'an and the organization of combat and its rules. The research concludes that the practical combat which the Prophet (PBUH) and his two Caliphs conducted was an exact and correct application of what the Holy Qur'an prescribes in regards to legitimate combat, its organization and its rules.

This is what you will read in this study and it is my fer-

vent hope that God has inspired me to write with reason and with wisdom.

My success is only with God. In Him I trust and to Him I turn [repentant]. (Hud, 11:88)

—Mahmoud Shaltut, July 1951

The Ideal Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis

There are two approaches to Qur'anic exegesis:

The First Approach: The exegete explains the verses and chapters of the Holy Qur'an in their traditional order and elucidates the meaning of words and the relationships between verses. This is the approach that people have become familiar with; it is as old as Qur'anic exegesis itself. One characteristic of this approach is that the exegesis is as varied as the exegetes who interpret the verses. For example, exegetes who are immersed in the sciences of rhetoric will employ rhetoric in interpreting the verses of the Holy Qur'an. Likewise, exegetes who are immersed in morphology and syntax will employ parsing words as a means of interpretation. Exegetes who are immersed in history will employ stories and news, they may even be tempted to take this too far and relate Judaica, or *Isra'iliyyat*; stories without due investigation or scrutiny. Furthermore, exegetes who are immersed in philosophy will enjoy discussing creatures and creation and this will be reflected in their exegesis. When they are immersed in theology and jurisprudence, their interpretation will no doubt be coloured by these things and so forth. These varied approaches to Qur'anic exegesis may make it difficult for people who turn to Qur'anic commentaries for Divine Guidance, reassurance and wisdom to find

these things.

As a result of this first approach, verses are sometimes explained in ways that alter their true meanings or purposes and sometimes they are even considered to have been abrogated. Oftentimes verses are interpreted on the basis of fundamental rules derived from jurisprudential branches by heads of *madhabs* (schools of thought). These rules are taken to be fundamentals that are referred to in understanding the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah and in deriving rules and laws. This does not stop at legislating laws and the Verses of Legislation but indeed encroaches into the area of beliefs and the opinions of different groups. Thus we may hear them say: "This verse does not agree with the Sunni *madhab* because its allegorical interpretation (*ta'weel*) is such and such." Or they may say: "This verse does not agree with the Hanafi *madhab* as its allegorical interpretation is such and such." Or they might say: "This verse, or these verses – around seventy of them – are incompatible with the legitimacy of combat (*qitaal*) and are therefore abrogated."

Thus the Holy Qur'an has become the branch after it was the root, a follower after it was followed and something weighed by a scale after it was the scale by which all things took their measure. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

> ... *If you should quarrel about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you believe in God and the Last Day … (Al-Nisa', 4:59)*

Referring to God is referring to His Book, and referring to the Prophet (PBUH) is referring to his Sunnah. But they have reversed this and have overturned legislation and have referred God's Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet to their opinions and the *madhabs* of their imitators. God says:

They have taken their rabbis and their monks as lords beside God ... (Al-Tawbah, 9:31)

In his exegesis of this verse Al-Fakhr Al-Razi relates that his sheikh said:

> I witnessed a group of jurist imitators listen as verses from the Holy Qur'an were recited to them in relation to particular issues; their *madhabs* were at odds with these verses and they did not accept them or pay them any heed. Instead, they continued to look at me in astonishment as if to say: "How can we comply with what these verses say when the narrative of those who came before us is at odds with them?"

As Al-Razi related this about his sheikh, so have many other scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Al-Izz bin Abdul-Salaam and many others.

These circuitous methods of interpreting the Holy Qur'an and this setback that the relationship between the Qur'an and jurisprudence and beliefs suffered caused a kind of intellectual chaos in regards to the Holy Qur'an and its mean-

ings. This chaos had an impact in making people feel averse to the Holy Qur'an and listening to exegetes.

The Second Approach: The exegete collects all the verses pertaining to a particular subject and analyzes them collectively and studies how they relate to each other. In this way the exegete can arrive at a proper judgement of the verses and becomes clear on what the verses are saying. With this approach the exegete also cannot impose an interpretation on any verse, rather the verse reveals its meaning; and the exegete does not miss the wonders of the Divine Word. In our view, this second approach is the ideal approach to Qur'anic exegesis; particularly if the intent is to spread the Qur'an's guidance and to show that the topics that the Qur'an deals with are not just purely theoretical and have no practical application in everyday life.

This approach also enables the exegete to deal with many practical issues, each one separate and independent. This way people may know the subjects of the Holy Qur'an with their clear titles and know how closely linked the Qur'an is to their practical daily lives. These subjects include: the Qur'an and the roots of legislation, the Qur'an and science, the Qur'an and the family, the Qur'an and the etiquette of social gatherings, the Qur'an and tourism, the Qur'an and economics, the Qur'an and sacrifice, the Qur'an and kindness and so on and so forth in areas that build a strong and flourishing nation. In this way people are assured, in a practical and clear way that the Holy Qur'an is not far removed from their lives or the way they think or their problems.

They are assured that the Holy Qur'an is not just a spiritual book whose sole mission is to explain how to be closer to the Almighty without concerning itself with the practical exigencies of daily life. This false and pernicious notion is widespread not only in general but among many people who claim to be, or whom people claim, are scholars. In the eyes of such people the Holy Qur'an becomes merely a collection of texts to recite or listen to in times of meditation, or a tool to invoke God's protection or to seek healing through. This is an injustice to the Holy Qur'an, indeed an injustice to these people themselves, their minds and their chances for a good life which they will otherwise deprive of an unstinting source of knowledge, wisdom, legislation, politics, education, refinement and all one needs to manage the issues that life throws at humans. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

> *Truly this Qur'an guides to that which is straightest and gives tidings to the believers who perform righteous deeds that there is a great reward for them. (Al-Isra', 17:9)*

This approach that we have described bears generous fruit to those who follow it and protects them from thinking ill of the Holy Qur'an and its legislation. It also puts the exegete face to face with the subject he wishes to discuss and places him in an environment steeped in relevant verses where he may use one to understand another. The most correct explanation of the Holy Qur'an is the explanation the

exegete absorbs from the Qur'an itself. It is often that an ordinary person perusing the Holy Qur'an misses the secret in a particular verse, but when he reads a sister verse discussing the same subject, the secret is unveiled and revealed to him.

It was our wish, and that of some men blessed with religious insight, to share this new approach to Qur'anic exegesis so that the topics of the Holy Qur'an may be known and studied purely and in a manner innocent of the impurities that may veil the Qur'an's truth or distort its beauty. Our wish is for the Qur'an to be studied far from the circuitous approach and in a manner that transcends extrinsic tales and imaginings that no sound mind that seeks truth could possibly believe. It is my hope that in this new approach to Qur'anic exegesis people may find what their souls yearn for in terms of learning about the guidance of the Holy Qur'an and contemplating its secrets and wisdom and benefitting from its principles and teachings.

Years ago, I applied this second approach to the subject of *The Qur'an and Women* and I believe that those who read it with good intent met it with an open and assured heart. The topic I should now like to discuss, utilizing the second approach, is *The Qur'an and Combat*. Combat is a very real issue in these troubled times and many people disparage Islam in the matter of combat. Learning the Holy Qur'an's wise prescriptions and rules regarding combat, its justifiable causes and its purpose has never been more pressing or pertinent. The Holy Qur'an proves to us that Islam loves peace and hates bloodshed and the loss of life for the sake of the

transient and the ephemeral; it also hates greed, gluttony and love of killing. Those who terrorize the world with their lethal wars should know how far they have deviated from Islam, which they believe is the only religion of peace. They should ask themselves if it is logical that a religion which calls for peace and for people to devote what God has given them to good and to building and not to what is harmful and destructive would be a religion that would approve that its followers terrorize the world and cause heartache and lay waste to once-flourishing cities and cultures. They even go so far as to say that their religion is the religion of peace and that other religions are religions of war established by the sword and coercion.

The Nature of Islamic Da'wah

To explore this subject let us first understand the nature of Islamic *da'wah* (the calling to Islam) and answer the question of whether or not it requires coercion. When a person is invited to embrace a principle, he may rush to adopt it with a reassured and contented heart, or he may find it repulsive and difficult to accept. These two phenomena are things we see in everyday life and indeed recognize in ourselves. What is the reason behind this? The reason is clear. When a truth that we are invited to embrace is straightforward, uncomplicated, unlaboured and does not manifestly or surreptitiously contain anything that offends human nature, we recognize it as a clear truth that draws us to it. A truth such as this does not need anything extraneous to enlist adherents. If, however, it is complicated, contradictory and twisted, it becomes a dark problem that repulses people and from which minds turn away. When this is the case, such principles or belief systems have to be imposed on people. Let us consider to which of these two types the call to Islam (*da'wah*) belongs.

God sent the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) after an interval between the Messengers as a caller, a bearer of good tidings and a warner (*Al-Ma'idah*, 5:19). The Almighty revealed to the Prophet Muhammad a book containing the fundamentals for happiness for the Ummah (the Muslim community) and for the individual. The Holy Qur'an commands judgement by reason, emphasizes evidence, encourages science and knowledge, details rules and the bounds of acceptable

behaviour and the punishments for serious crimes. It calls for mercy, encourages righteousness, promotes peace, suspends distress, strives for ease, determines the fundamentals of politics and the principles of social interaction, it fights baseness and corruption, battles mental stagnation and disapproves of blind imitation of the ways of ancestors. It cries to people that they have another life more exalted than this life, a life where bliss is permanent and existence is eternal. It tells humanity that a person's end is of his or her beginning; that life in the hereafter is determined by life in this world. Thus was the calling, the *da'wah*, of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Its foremost principle was monotheism, the worship of, and faith in, the One God who is above any and all imperfections or needs and qualities comparable to those of His creatures:

> *The Originator of the heavens and the earth; how should He have a son, when He has no consort, and He created everything, and He has knowledge of all things? {101} That then is God, your Lord. There is no god but Him, the Creator of all things. So worship Him. And He is Guardian over all things. {102} Vision cannot attain Him, but He attains [all] vision. And He is the Subtle, the Aware. {103} (Al-An'am, 6:101–103)*

Islam honours humanity and elevates it from worshipping something that cannot see or hear, something that is neither harmful nor beneficial. Islam confirms all the reli-

gions that have preceded it and does not oppose any of their principles. It also makes no distinctions between any of the Prophets, all of whom called for monotheism, enjoined good deeds and rejected wrongdoing. All the Prophets also called for virtue and the rejection of moral depravity. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

Say: 'We believe in God, and in that which has been revealed to us, and revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses, and Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord, we make no division between any of them, and to Him we submit'. {136} And if they believe in the like of what you believe in, then they are truly guided; but if they turn away, then they are clearly in schism; God will suffice you against them; He is the Hearer, the Knower. {137} (Al-Baqarah, 2:136–137)

And:

Say: 'O People of the Scripture! Come now to a word agreed upon between us and you, that we worship none but God and that we do not associate anything with Him, and do not take each other for lords, beside God'; and if they turn their backs, say, 'Bear witness that we have submitted'. (Aal-Imran, 3:64)

And:

And do not dispute with the People of the Scripture unless it be with that, bettering the most virtuous way, except [in the case of] those of them who have done wrong, and say: 'We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you our God and your God is one [and the same], and to Him we submit'. (Al-Ankabut, 29:46)

And:

He has prescribed for you as a religion that which He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus [declaring], 'Establish religion and do not be divided in it'... (Al-Shura, 42:13)

These verses, among others, define Islam's *da'wah* and show us that it is clear, evident, uncomplicated, and free of inscrutability and ambiguity. No mind is incapable of digesting it and it is in line with natural human thought. It is the call of previous religions and the call of previous Messengers; it is in fact the call of human nature and human instinct and therefore not incongruent with reason and understanding.

The mark of God; and who has a better mark than God? (Al-Baqarah, 2:138)

... A nature given by God, upon which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's

creation. That is the upright religion ... (Al-Rum, 30:30)

This is the Islamic *da'wah*. Does such a call need coercion to gain adherents? That would be an insult to Islam, would repel people from it and would only serve to create obstacles in Islam's path. If a person feels coerced into something; compelled and forced, he does not appreciate, respect and reflect on it, let alone be able to believe in it. Employing coercion as a means to gain adherents wraps the call in complexity, perversity and ambiguity. It would also push it away from the hearts and minds of humanity; no doubt this would be a grave injustice and would keep it away from the grasp of the human heart and mind; a terrible injustice to the call. It would also be offensive to the call and would only be an obstacle in its way. It would be incomprehensible for a call that wishes to succeed to pursue its aims while containing within itself elements that cause its own weakness and ultimately extinction, or components that are offensive to it and distort its beauty.

Now that this has been clarified, we could leave it at that, confident that people will appreciate it and use it as a guiding principle in the matter of Islam and combat. However, we will not content ourselves with this, we will refer to the texts that discuss *da'wah* itself and see if any of them allow coercion in matters of faith and if any of them respect faith rooted in coercion. One expects that the answer is self-evident, and from several points of view and aspects.

The Holy Qur'an tells us clearly that God does not wish people to become believers by way of force and compulsion, rather by way of seeing, thinking and reflecting. The Qur'an also tells us that if God wanted that kind of faith from people, He would have imprinted it on them and created them to be like the angels who do not disobey God and do as He commands because that is their nature and the way they were created. God does not want that and leaves mankind free to choose belief or unbelief, between guidance and going astray. God created humans and gave them human nature and human instinct. He sent Prophets to remind them and call on them to contemplate the kingdom of heaven and earth:

... So that people might have no argument against God after the messengers ... (Al-Nisa', 4:165)

... Lest you should say: 'There has not come to us any bearer of good tidings nor any warner' ... (Al-Ma'idah, 5:19)

Such is God's will which He made clear in the Holy Qur'an:

Had your Lord willed, He would have made mankind one community, but they continue to differ,
{118} except those on whom your Lord has mercy;

and that is why He created them... {119} (Hud, 11: 118–119)

... *And if your Lord willed, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Would you then compel people until they are believers? (Yunus, 10:99)*

If God had willed, He would have made you one community, but that He may try you in what He has given to you. So vie with one another in good works; to God you shall all return, and He will then inform you of that in which you differed. (Al-Ma'idah, 5:48)

And if their aversion is grievous for you, then, if you can, seek out a hole in the earth, or a ladder to heaven, that you may bring them a sign, but had God willed, He would have gathered them together in guidance; so do not be among the ignorant. (Al-An'am, 6:35)

Upon this cosmic Sunnah the Divine Laws are founded. They call for monotheism, the worship of only the Creator based on sight, inference, inclination and choice; for there is no power except for reason and no conqueror except for evidence. One finds that none of the Divine Laws impose faith by way of force and compulsion. The Holy Qur'an tells us that the Prophet Noah (PBUH) said to his people:

… 'O my people, have you considered if I am [acting] upon a clear proof from my Lord and He has given me mercy from Him, and it has been obscured from you, can we compel you to it, while you are averse to it? (Hud, 11:28)

And the Holy Qur'an relates that the people of Aad say to their Messenger:

… 'O Hud, you have not brought us any clear proof, and we are not going to forsake our gods on [the basis of] your saying, and we are not believers in you. (Hud, 11:53)

And *Hud* answers:

Truly I have put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord; there is no creature, but He takes it by the forelock. Surely my Lord is on a straight path. {56} And if you turn away, still I have conveyed to you that wherewith I was sent to you… {57} (Hud, 11:56–57)

And Abraham (PBUH) calls to his father in a kind and gentle manner, by way of argument, proof, sentiment and conscience:

'O my father! Indeed there has come to me of knowledge that which has not come to you. So

follow me that I may guide you to a path that is right. {43} O my father! Do not worship Satan. Truly Satan is disobedient to the Compassionate One. {44} O my father! I do fear lest a chastisement from the Compassionate One should befall you and then you become an ally of Satan. {45} He said, 'Are you renouncing my gods, O Abraham? If you do not desist, I shall surely assail you; and stay away from me for a long time'. {46} He said, 'Peace be to you. I shall ask forgiveness of my Lord for you. Truly He is ever gracious to me. {47} And I shall shun you and that which you call upon besides God. I will supplicate my Lord — hopefully in calling upon my Lord I shall not be wretched'. {48} (Maryam, 19:43–48)

And God says to Moses and Aaron when He entrusts them with calling their people to Him:

Go the two of you to Pharaoh. Truly he has transgressed [the bounds]. {43} And speak to him gentle words that perhaps he may be mindful or fear'. {44} (Ta Ha, 20:43–44)

If one were to contemplate the above verses, one would come to understand that the only weapon God gave His previous Messengers – when they were entrusted with *da'wah* – was the clear argument of nature and the calling of attention to God's works. This is in accordance with God's Sunnah regarding belief and unbelief, guidance and

going astray. God tells the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) all this in the Holy Qur'an in which He explains how the Messengers propagated *da'wah*. God says to the Prophet in the Holy Qur'an:

> *They are the ones whom God has guided; so follow their guidance. (Al-An'am, 6:90)*

Then God elucidates to the Prophet (PBUH) the ways of *da'wah* and propagating the Message in one unique and comprehensive verse:

> *Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and dispute with them by way of that which is best … (Al-Nahl, 16:125)*

This is the principle on which the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) *da'wah*, his call to God, was based:

> *Say: 'This is my way: I call to God, being upon sure knowledge, I and whoever follows me. So Glory be to God! and I am not of the idolaters'. (Yusuf, 12:108)*

The preceding verses describe the nature of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) *da'wah* and that of his fellow Messengers and Prophets. But there is a particular quality with which God exclusively endowed the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Mission: He made him the Prophet who was the

farthest away from employing coercion, compulsion and special expedients that do not depend on pure reason to make people believe. The *da'wahs* of the earlier Prophets had been accompanied by clear miracles that induced people to believe; miracles such as bringing the dead back to life, healing the blind and healing lepers etc.. But with regard to the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Mission, God did not conform to the desires of the idolaters who demanded that the Prophet (PBUH) display such miracles:

> *And they say, 'We will not believe you until you make gush forth for us from the ground a spring; {90} or until you [come to] have a garden of date-palms and vines, and cause streams to gush forth therein, abundantly; {91} or until you cause the heaven to fall upon us, as you assert, in pieces, or bring God and the angels [right] in front [of us]; {92} or until you [come to] have a house adorned with gold, or ascend into the heaven, and [even then] we will not believe your ascension, until you bring down for us a book, that we may read'. Say: 'Glory be to my Lord! Am I anything but a human, a messenger [from God]?' {93} (Al-Isra', 17:90–93)*

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained that his only sign was of the same nature as his clear *da'wah*: rational evidence that fills one's insight before one's eyesight and takes hold of the heart before it takes hold of the senses. God says

in the Holy Qur'an:

And they say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: 'Signs are only with God and I am only a plain warner'. {50} *Is it not sufficient for them that We have revealed to you the Book which is recited to them? Surely in that is mercy and a reminder for a people who believe.* {51} *Say: 'God suffices as a witness between me and you'. He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And those who believe in falsehood, and [who] disbelieve in God, those, they are the losers.* {52} *(Al-Ankabut, 29:50–52)*

And:

If We will We shall send down to them a sign from the heaven before which their necks will remain bowed in humility. (Al-Shu'ara', 26:4)

With these and similar verses, of which there are many in the Holy Qur'an, God explains that the Qur'an itself is sufficient to make people believe in the *da'wah* of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and that God does not want to force belief by means of awe-inspiring signs. On the other hand, God explains that the Prophet Muhammad's task does not go beyond conveying his Message, warning and announcing good tidings. God laid down this task in the Meccan part of the Holy Qur'an which was revealed when the Muslims

were few in number and without power. God also clarified the Prophet's task in the Medinan part of the Holy Qur'an which was revealed when the Muslims became strong and formidable. The following verses are from the Meccan part of the Holy Qur'an:

It is only a reminder for all worlds, {27} for those of you who wish to go straight {28} (Al-Takwir, 81:27–28)

So remind. For you are only an admonisher; {21} you are not a taskmaster over them. {22} But he who turns away and disbelieves, {23} God will chastise him with the greater chastisement. {24} Truly to Us will be their return, {25} then truly with Us will lie their reckoning. {26} (Al-Ghashiyah, 88:21–26)

The following verses are from the Medinan part of the Holy Qur'an:

Say: 'Obey God, and obey the Messenger. But if you turn away, [know that] he is only responsible for that with which he has been charged, and you are responsible for that with which you have been charged. And if you obey him, you will be [rightly] guided. And the Messenger's duty is only to convey [the Message] clearly'. (Al-Nur, 24:54)

There are many verses confirming and supporting this

meaning, clarifying the Prophet Muhammad's task and his call to God's religion. How far removed this meaning is from compulsion and how averse it is to the use of coercion as a means of *da'wah*. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an states clearly and unequivocally that faith rooted in coercion and compulsion is worthless and he who embraces it is without dignity. The Holy Qur'an relates that when Pharaoh was drowning, he said:

> … *'I believe that there is no god save Him in whom the Children of Israel believe …' {90} Now, when hitherto you have disobeyed and been of those who do corruption? {91} (Yunus, 10:90–91)*

God says in the Holy Qur'an:

> *Then, when they saw Our doom, they said, 'We believe in God alone, and we disavow what we used to associate with Him'. {84} But their faith was of no benefit to them when they saw Our doom — God's way, [a precedent] which has passed among His servants, and it is thence that the disbelievers will be losers. {85} (Ghafir, 40:84–85)*

The Holy Qur'an also states that repentance that has been caused by coercion or anguish is not accepted:

Repentance is not for those who do evil deeds until, when death approaches one of them, he says, 'Indeed now I repent' … (Al-Nisa', 4:18)

So we see that the Holy Qur'an does not accept faith and repentance that are rooted in coercion and which have not been freely and peacefully accepted in the heart. How is it logical then that Islam would condone or require coercion in matters of religion; any religion?

There is no compulsion in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error; so whoever disbelieves in the false deity, and believes in God, has laid hold of the most firm handle, unbreaking; God is Hearing, Knowing. (Al-Baqarah, 2:256)

From the abovementioned we can conclude that there is absolutely no reason or justification for anyone to believe or presume that the Islamic *da'wah* forces people to believe in Islam by means of the sword and combat.

From this chapter we can conclude:

First: The nature of the Islamic *da'wah* is free of complexity, ambiguity and intellectual hardship that would require manifest or surreptitious coercion[1].

Second: Islamic Shari'ah Law, taken from the Qur'an, is not in contravention of, or opposition with, God's cosmic Sunnah which He made the basis for the faith of the believers and the basis for the disbelief of the disbelievers i.e.

man is free to choose for himself through examination and conviction.

Third: Islamic Shari'ah Law, taken from the precise and unambiguous verses of the Holy Qur'an, rejects the use of coercion as a means to call people to God, as do the laws of the other preceding (Divinely Revealed) religions.

Fourth: The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the first person to take on the responsibility of *da'wah*, and as such he was responsible before God for the sole task of his Message which the Holy Qur'an expounded in both its Meccan and Medinan parts. The task was to convey and warn, not use coercion and violence to demand faith from people[2].

Fifth: The Holy Qur'an, which is the source of the Islamic *da'wah*, does not respect faith that has been coerced and forced and denies its validity on the Day of Resurrection. How then could it enjoin coercion or allow it as a method to call people to believe in the Message of Islam.

We know these conclusions from the Qur'an itself and believing in them is part of believing in the Holy Qur'an. Here one may ask: "Given these conclusions, what is the significance of the Verses of Combat (*ayaatul qitaal*) in the Holy Qur'an?"

This will be the subject of our next chapter.

The Verses of Combat (*Ayaatul Qitaal*)

In this chapter we will review the Verses of Combat in the Holy Qur'an in order to understand their meaning, significance, purpose and their relation to each other. Then we shall arrive at a conclusion regarding the verses which command combat and, together with the conclusions reached in the preceding chapter, we shall elucidate the verses.

The Holy Qur'an expounds on two kinds of combat: the first is combat between Muslims and the second is combat between Muslims and non-Muslims.

First: Combat between Muslims is an internal matter of the Muslim Ummah and is governed by its own laws that concern only the Ummah and no one else. The Holy Qur'an is clear about how to handle instances of rebellion and breach of public order, whether between subjects or between subjects and rulers. It legislates how to manage such situations in a manner that preserves the unity of the Muslim Ummah and the authority and standing of the ruling body so that the community is protected from the evils of aggression and hostility. This is clear in the following verses from *Surat Al-Hujurat*:

> *And if two parties of believers fall to warfare, make peace between them. And if one of them aggresses against the other, fight the one which aggresses until it returns to God's ordinance. Then, if*

it returns, reconcile them, and act justly. Surely God loves the just. {9} *The believers are indeed brothers. Therefore [always] make peace between your brethren, and fear God, so that perhaps you might receive mercy.* {10} *(Al-Hujurat, 49:9–10)*

These two verses discuss a situation where a disagreement that cannot be solved by peaceful means breaks out between two groups of believers who both resort to the use of force and the judgment of the sword. The verses stipulate that the Ummah, represented by its government, investigates the causes of strife between the two groups and tries to reconcile them. If this is achieved through negotiations, and both parties receive their dues, aggression is warded off and security is restored; thus God saves the believers from combat. If, however, one of the groups continues to aggress against the other, refuses to comply with God's commands and attacks the authority of the believers, then it has become an aggressor that has rebelled against the rule of law and the system. In this case, the community of Muslims must fight (*qitaal*) it until it submits and returns to what is righteous. The verses then clarify the secret to successfully resolving any discord that might arise between different groups. The secret is that when a group returns to what is righteous, it may not be oppressed or deprived of its rights; indeed, justice must prevail and each group must be given its dues. Consider the end of the first verse (49:9): ﴾ *Surely God loves the just* ﴿. The verses tell us that the intention behind the legislation is

the preservation of the unity and indivisibility of the Ummah and the safeguarding of religious brotherhood; one of the important matters of faith. The second verse says:

> *The believers are indeed brothers. Therefore [always] make peace between your brethren, and fear God, so that perhaps you might receive mercy. (Al-Hujurat, 49:10)*

These wise Qur'anic legislations were revealed by an illiterate Prophet to ensure peace and bring an end to aggression and violence. They were revealed more than thirteen centuries before humanity came up with the "League of Nations" or the "Security Council" as a means to preserve peace and guarantee liberties and rights for people and states.

If nations understood these wise legislations properly, gave them the attention they deserve and followed them, they would never go astray from the path of wisdom and they would be spared the repeated catastrophes caused by aggression and violence on the one hand and disagreement and division on the other. These are the rules legislated by the Holy Qur'an regarding combat between Muslims. This combat clearly has no bearing on the principles of Islamic *da'wah* and faith in its Message.

Second: Combat between Muslims and non-Muslims. The Holy Qur'an expounds in a comprehensive manner, in many verses and chapters, the legitimate causes and purposes of combat between Muslims and non-Muslims. It enjoins

that when the purposes of legitimate combat are achieved, it must end. The Qur'an also elucidates what Muslims should be prepared for and the necessary cautions they must take against an unexpected outbreak of war. The Holy Qur'an clarifies the rules and regulations of this kind of combat, in addition to those of truces and treaties. In the following we shall discuss the verses dealing with the causes of this kind of combat, and how it must stop when its purposes are achieved. We will then discuss the relationship between the Verses of Forgiveness and the Verses of Combat.

The early Muslims spent many years in Mecca suffering the worst kinds of punishment, they were not free to worship, were persecuted for believing in a creed that brought them reassurance and were terrorized with regard to property and personal safety. All this continued until they were forced to emigrate. They left their homes and settled in Medina, patiently accepting God's will. Whenever they felt the urge to resist oppression and seek revenge, the Prophet held them back and urged them to be patient and await God's will. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "I have not been ordered to fight (*qitaal*)". This lasted until the Muslims were almost overcome by despair and doubt. Just then God revealed the first Verses of Combat:

> *Permission is granted to those who fight because they have been wronged. And God is truly able to help them; {39} those who were expelled from their homes without right, only because they said:*

'Our Lord is God'. Were it not for God's causing some people to drive back others, destruction would have befallen the monasteries, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which God's Name is mentioned greatly. Assuredly God will help those who help Him. God is truly Strong, Mighty — {40} those who, if We empower them in the land, maintain the prayer, and pay the alms, and enjoin decency and forbid indecency. And with God rests the outcome of all matters. {41} (Al-Hajj, 22:39–41)

These verses discuss and justify the permission for combat because of the injustices the Muslims faced and because they were expelled from their homes and forced to emigrate. The verses then explain that this permission is in line with the Sunnah of people clashing which maintains a certain equilibrium and averts oppression. It also allows the adherents of different faiths to perform their religious rituals and preserve the doctrine of monotheism. Finally, these verses show that it is God's Sunnah to help those who help Him, the pious who do not use war as an instrument for destruction and corruption, for subjugating the weak and satisfying their own desires and ambitions. The verses make it clear that God helps those who, if they are empowered in the land, cultivate it with goodness and obey God's orders, and are causes for goodness and righteousness and not causes for what is wicked and corrupt. Indeed, God knows who is destructive and who is a cause for good. God says at the

end of these verses: ﴿ *And with God rests the outcome of all matters* ﴾."

As we have said, these verses are the first Verses of Combat. They are very clear and do not contain even the slightest evidence of coercion. On the contrary, they confirm that people clashing with each other is one of God's cosmic Sunnahs, inevitable for the preservation of order and the continuation of righteousness and civilization. Without this principle, the earth would be corrupted and all the different places of worship would be destroyed. Indeed, that would happen if tyrants had control over religion, free to abuse it without restraint, coercing people to convert without anyone standing in their way. These verses are not specific to Muslims, they are about humanity in general; they state clearly that destruction would have befallen monasteries, churches and synagogues.

Now let us consider the Verses of Combat in *Surat Al-Baqarah*:

> *And fight in the way of God with those who fight against you, but aggress not; God loves not the aggressors.* {190} *And slay them wherever you come upon them, and expel them from where they expelled you; sedition is more grievous than slaying. But fight them not by the Sacred Mosque until they should fight you there; then if they fight you, slay them — such, is the requital of disbelievers.* {191} *But if they desist, surely God is Forgiving, Merciful.* {192} *Fight them till*

there is no sedition, and the religion is for God; then if they desist, there shall be no enmity, save against evil-doers. {193} *The sacred month for the sacred month; holy things demand retaliation; whoever commits aggression against you, then commit aggression against him in the manner that he committed against you; and fear God, and know that God is with the God-fearing.* {194} *(Al-Baqarah, 2:190–194)*

These verses command the Muslims to fight (*qitaal*) in the way of God those who fight against them, to pursue them wherever they are and to scatter them as they have scattered the Muslimts. The verses prohibit unprovoked aggression and emphasize that God does not love aggression or aggressors. The verses then explain that expelling people from their homes, terrorizing their safety and preventing them from living peacefully without fear for their lives or possessions is sedition worse than murder and bloodshed. Therefore, those who practice or provoke these things must be fought in the same manner that fighters must be fought. The verses also prohibit combat in holy places and during holy periods, unless Muslims are under attack in holy places or during holy periods. In these cases, Muslims are allowed to retaliate in equal proportion. The verses then clarify that when the purposes of legitimate combat are achieved, it must end. These purposes are that there be no sedition in matters of religion and that people enjoy religious freedom without oppression or torture. When these purposes are ac-

complished and people feel safe, combat must cease.

These verses and the principles expounded in them regarding the reasons and purposes of combat do not contain even the slightest trace of the idea of coercion. On the contrary, these verses, like the ones that precede them, state clearly and distinctly that the reason the Muslims were ordered to fight (*qitaal*) was the aggression they faced and the fact that they had been expelled from their homes, and because God's sacred institutions had been violated. Another reason explained in the verses is the many attempts to create sedition in the faith of the Muslims. The verses also clarify the purpose behind such combat, which is to end violence against Muslims and to establish religious freedom devoted to God, free from any pressure or coercion.

We see the principles expounded in these verses in many other Verses of Combat in the following *Surahs* of the Holy Qur'an: *Al-Nisa'*, *Al-Anfal* and *Al-Tawbah*. God says in *Surat Al-Nisa'*:

> *What is wrong with you, that you do not fight in the way of God, and for the oppressed men, women, and children who say, 'Our Lord, bring us forth from this town whose people are evildoers and appoint for us a protector from You, and appoint for us from You a helper'. (Al-Nisa', 4:75)*

> *So fight in the way of God; you are charged only with yourself. And urge on the believers; maybe*

God will restrain the might of the disbelievers; God is mightier and more severe in castigation. (Al-Nisa', 4:84)

… *And so if they stay away from you and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God does not allow you any way against them. {90} … So, if they do not stay away from you, and offer you peace, and restrain their hands, then take them and slay them wherever you come upon them; against them We have given you clear warrant. {91} (Al-Nisa', 4:90–91)*

Consider the following in these verses: ﴿ … *maybe God will restrain the might of the disbelievers…* ﴾ and ﴿ … *if they do not stay away from you…* ﴾. When we reflect on these verses we can understand the spirit of sedition that people harboured against Muslims and on account of which the Muslims were ordered to fight them (*qitaal*). This is exactly the same principle that is expounded in the verses we sited from *Surat Al-Baqarah*, *Surat Al-Anfal* and *Surat Al-Tawbah*. God says in *Surat Al-Anfal*:

And fight them until sedition is no more and religion is all for God; then if they desist, surely God sees what they do. (Al-Anfal, 8:39)

This verse is similar to what God says in *Surat Al-Baqarah* and *Surat Al-Tawbah*:

But if they break their oaths after [making] their pact and assail your religion, then fight the leaders of unbelief — verily they have no [binding] oaths, so that they might desist. {12} *Will you not fight a people who broke their oaths and intended to expel the Messenger — initiating against you first? Are you afraid of them? God is more worthy of your fear if you are believers.* {13} *(Al-Tawbah, 9:12–13)*

… *And fight the idolaters altogether, even as they fight you altogether; and know that God is with those who fear Him. (Al-Tawbah, 9:36)*

Consider the following in these verses: ﴾*But if they break their oaths after [making] their pact and assail your religion…*﴿ and ﴾*initiating against you first…*﴿ and ﴾*even as they fight you altogether*﴿. When we reflect on these verses we can understand that they were revealed about people who were recalcitrant in their sedition and in whom the elements of corruption were so deeply rooted that oaths had become of no value to them and virtue of no significance. There is no doubt that combat with these people, purifying the earth from them and ending their sedition is to serve the common good of mankind.

In *Surat Al-Tawbah*, after the verses we quoted above, there are two verses that at first consideration seem to contradict the principles regarding combat. We shall site theses two verses and clarify what they signify in light of the

preceding verses which, because they are many and clear, are fundamental with regard to the legality of combat and the reasons for it. Therefore, other verses must be compared to the principles contained in those verses and interpreted accordingly.

The first verse is:

Fight those who do not believe in God, nor in the Last Day, and who do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden, nor do they practice the religion of truth, from among of those who have been given the Scripture, until they pay the jizyah tribute, readily being subdued. (Al-Tawbah, 9:29)

The second verse is:

O you who believe, fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that God is with the pious. (Al-Tawbah, 9:123)

The first verse commands the Muslims to fight (*qitaal*) a group that God describes as people who "*do not believe in God*". This group has behaved with the Muslims in a manner that is cause to fight them: they broke pacts, attacked the *da'wah* and placed obstacles in its path. However, the verses do not state that unbelief in God and the other descriptions mentioned are reasons for the Muslims to fight them; the

verses only mention them as descriptions and clarifications. These descriptions are meant to serve as further incitement to fight them once their aggression materializes. For they changed God's religion to suit themselves and took their rabbis and monks as lords beside God (*Al-Tawbah*, 9:30), while allowing and forbidding things according to their whims and unbelieving in what God has decreed as forbidden or permissible. Nothing deters them from aggression, breaking pacts and violating rights. These are the people whom, according to the above verses, must be fought continuously until they yield and desist from harm and spreading sedition. The Holy Qur'an introduces a symbol to signify this yielding; the payment of a tribute or poll tax (*jizyah*). The *jizyah* was a means through which they actually participated in shouldering the burdens of the state and shared the means for the common good of both Muslims and non-Muslims[3].

The verse also indicates the reason for combat which we have already pointed out. The phrase: ﴿*readily being subdued*﴾ shows us the state they will be in when the *jizyah* is collected from them, a state of yielding to the authority of the Muslims and living under their laws. Doubtless this means that previously they had been recalcitrant and that there was good cause for the Muslims to fight them.

This is how this verse should be understood and its context brings it in agreement with the other verses. If the intention behind this verse was to have the Muslims fight them because of their unbelief and to show that unbelief was the reason why they were fought, then the verse would have

stated that the purpose of this combat was to have them convert to Islam. In this case *jizyah* would not have been an acceptable result, nor indeed would allowing them to abide by their own religion.

The second verse: ﴿ *… fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you…* ﴾ should not be compared with the previous verses which were revealed to clarify the reasons and causes for combat. This verse was revealed to show a practical war plan to be followed when legitimate combat breaks out. The verse guides the Muslims that, when enemies are manifold, the nearest of them should be fought first and so on, in order to clear the road from enemies and to facilitate victory[4].

This principle, established in the Holy Qur'an, is one of the principles followed today by warring states. No belligerent state attacks until it has cleared the path before it and until it is sure that all obstacles in its way have been removed. Thus, it is clear that these two verses have no link to the reason for combat as formulated by the other verses.

From what we have discussed one may infer that:

There is not a single verse in the Holy Qur'an that indicates that the aim of combat in Islam is conversion.

The causes for combat – as seen in the preceding verses – are limited to fending off aggression, protecting the *da'wah* and safeguarding freedom of religion.

When the Holy Qur'an prescribed combat, it distanced it from avarice, selfishness and the abasement of the meek. Indeed the Holy Qur'an intended combat (*qitaal*) only as a

means to peace, security and a life of justice and equality.

The *jizyah* was never intended as payment in return for one's life or retaining one's religion, it was intended as a symbol to signify yielding, an end of hostility and a participation in shouldering the burdens of the state.

After this has been explained, nobody can malign Islam or misinterpret the verses of the Holy Qur'an and assume what other ignorant people have assumed; that Islam has chosen combat (*qitaal*) as a means of propagating its *da'wah*, and that its calling was propagated by coercion and the use of force.

We shall now cite a verse from *Surat Al-Mumtahanah* that can be considered an Islamic ordinance regarding how Muslims should treat non-Muslims.

> *God does not forbid you in regard to those who did not wage war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes, that you should treat them kindly and deal with them justly. Assuredly God loves the just. {8} God only forbids you in regard to those who waged war against you on account of religion and expelled you from your homes and supported [others] in your expulsion, that you should make friends with them. And whoever makes friends with them, those — they are the wrongdoers. {9} (Al-Mumtahanah, 60:8–9)*

Read this ordinance then recall *Surat Al-Ma'idah*, one of the last parts of the Holy Qur'an to be revealed, and

note what it says about the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims:

> *Today the good things are permitted to you, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is permitted to you, and permitted to them is your food. Likewise, the believing married women, and the married women of those who were given the Scripture before you, if you give them their wages in wedlock, and not illicitly, or taking them as lovers. Whoever disbelieves in faith, his work has indeed failed, and in the Hereafter he shall be among the losers. (Al-Ma'idah, 5:5)*

When one considers these verses, one understands the sublime spirit that Islam possesses with regard to its relations with non-Muslims: kindness, justice, friendship and affinity. It is a relationship so magnificent that even the most modern principles of international relations known to man pale in comparison.

The Relationship Between the Verses of Forgiveness and the Verses of Combat

It now behoves us to discuss an issue that has occupied the minds of many people while examining the Holy Qur'an and comparing its verses. These people fall into two categories:

1. a group that is antagonistic towards Islam and who searches the Holy Qur'an for faults
2. a group of Qur'anic exegetes whose religious zeal drives them to reconcile supposed inconsistencies within the Holy Qur'an

The second group is inclined to consider that some verses abrogate others and some of these exegetes allow themselves to get carried away to such an extent that they seem to have paved the road, unintentionally, for attacks by those who are antagonistic to Islam and to the Holy Qur'an.

The antagonists have examined the relationship between the different Verses of Combat (*ayaatul qitaal*) and the Verses of Combat as a whole; they have also examined the Verses of Pardon and Forgiveness. Their conclusion is that while some Verses of Combat permit combat, other verses urge combat and incite it. And while some verses order combat against those who aggress and forbid instigating aggression, other

verses command that everyone be fought mercilessly, relentlessly and without distinction between aggressors and others. While these verses as a whole order and regulate combat, there are many other verses found in all *Surahs* of the Holy Qur'an that command forgiveness, pardon, countering evil with good and a calling to the way of God with wisdom.

The antagonists claim that these are all contradictions and are incompatible with the idea that the Holy Qur'an was divinely revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). As for those who love the Holy Qur'an and serve it, they hold that the Verses of Combat abrogate the Verses of Forgiveness and Pardon, even verses like (*Fussilat*, 41:34): ﴾ *And they are not equal, the good deed and the evil deed. Repel with that which is better…* ﴿ and (*Al-Nahl*, 16:125): ﴾ *Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and dispute with them by way of that which is best…* ﴿ They also say that (*Al-Tawbah*, 9:36): ﴾ *… fight the idolaters altogether, even as they fight you altogether…* ﴿ abrogates any preceding Verses of Forgiveness.

One of their more peculiar opinions is that (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:191) ﴾ *And slay them wherever you come upon them…* ﴿ abrogates the immediately preceding verse (*Al-Baqarah*, 2: 190): ﴾ *And fight in the way of God with those who fight against you…* ﴿ They also say that (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:193): ﴾ *Fight them till there is no sedition…* ﴿ abrogates (*Al-Baqarah*, 2: 191): ﴾ *… But fight them not by the Sacred Mosque until they should fight you there…* ﴿.

The above Qur'anic pericope from *Surat Al-Baqarah* is made up of four verses; two abrogating verses and two

abrogated verses: the second verse abrogates the first and the fourth abrogates the third. Al-Imam Al-Razi commented on this opinion in his great work on Qur'anic exegesis *Al-Tafsir Al-Kabir*: "It is improbable that the Wise One would combine verses in a row where each abrogates the other." It is not improbable that this interpretation has paved the road for antagonists of Islam to say that the Holy Qur'an contains contradictions. They do not accept the notion of abrogation as claimed by lovers of the Holy Qur'an. Indeed how can they accept our claim when even some of our own scholars do not?

After this explanation, one can see that there is no contradiction or incompatibility between the different Verses of Combat and no room for the idea that some have been abrogated because abrogation is only applied when there is contradiction. These verses are therefore fixed and unassailable; amounting to the same thing and establishing one rule, one reason and one purpose.

As for the Verses of Forgiveness and Pardon, they aim to shape morality and are to be followed in a context that does not infringe on pride and dignity. Every situation has its own legislation and these verses are also fixed and unassailable.

Legislation that is built upon consideration for different situations, and for the different conditions of individuals and groups, and asks of people that in each situation they follow what is most suitable, cannot be accused of being a contradictory legislation or that some parts of it abrogate others. Indeed, to people with sound minds, it is a wise and extremely precise legislation that promotes the interest of

those who fall under its authority and brings happiness to the individual and the community.

The Verses that Organise Combat

In the previous chapters we concluded that the Holy Qur'an gives only three reasons for combat: fending off aggression, protecting the *da'wah* and safeguarding freedom of religion. These are the only cases in which God urges combat (*qitaal*) and considers it lawful and desirable. God also reveals many of the ethics and rules that guarantee victory. In this chapter we will discuss the verses that expound these aspects of combat.

When one studies these verses in the Holy Qur'an, one finds that Islam stipulates general principles that constitute an objective law for combat that is better than any other found in modern civilization. This objective law for combat for a nation that wishes for itself pride and dignity is based on three elements:

1. strengthening the nation's morale
2. preparing material force
3. practical organization for combat

In outlining the ways in which people may enjoy a good life, the Holy Qur'an expounds these three elements in a manner that encompasses all the institutions and systems that humanity has produced in all its varied cultures and throughout the ages. These elements are powerful, extensive and dominate people's hearts and fill them with mercy, com-

passion, devotion and a desire for God's approval through purifying the earth from corruption and clearing it from tyranny and aggression. These notions are present in all three elements.

Regarding the first element, strengthening the nation's morale; the Holy Qur'an says about this:

> *So let them fight in the way of God those who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter; and whoever fights in the way of God and is slain or conquers, We shall give him a great wage.* {74} *What is wrong with you, that you do not fight in the way of God, and for the oppressed men, women, and children who say, 'Our Lord, bring us forth from this town whose people are evildoers and appoint for us a protector from You, and appoint for us from You a helper'.* {75} *Those who believe fight in the way of God, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of a false deity. Fight therefore against the friends of Satan; surely the plotting of Satan is ever feeble.* {76} *(Al-Nisa', 4: 74–76)*

These words stir the emotions towards combat (*qitaal*) in the way of God. And God doubles the reward of those who struggle in God's way. This combat is waged to save the weak, show goodness to one's fellow human, to resist tyranny and despotism and to defeat the agents of evil and corruption. The Holy Qur'an also says:

Do you reckon the giving of water to pilgrims and the attendance of the Sacred Mosque to be the same as he who believes in God and the Last Day and struggles in the way of God? They are not equal in God's sight; and God guides not the evildoing folk. {19} Those who believe, and have emigrated, and have struggled in the way of God with their possessions and their lives are greater in degree with God; and those, they are the triumphant. {20} Their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him and beatitude; for them shall be gardens wherein is enduring bliss, {21} therein they shall abide forever. Surely with God is a tremendous reward. {22} (Al-Tawbah, 9:19–22)

When one studies these verses deeply, particularly the words: ﴾ *Surely with God is a tremendous reward* ﴿, one comes to know that those who struggle in the way of God with their lives or their money have unlimited rewards that can only be comprehended by the All-Knowing, Exalted One. The Holy Qur'an also says:

Indeed God has purchased from the believers their lives and their possessions, so that theirs will be [the reward of] Paradise: they shall fight in the way of God and they shall kill and be killed; that is a promise which is binding upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an; and who fulfils his covenant better than God? Rejoice then in this bargain of yours

which you have made, for that is the supreme triumph. (Al-Tawbah, 9:111)

In this verse God reminds the believers of the divine promise that He has taken upon Himself on behalf of those who struggle in His way. It is a promise that God made clear in all His Books. In this verse from *Surat Al-Tawbah* God presents it in the form of a contract between a seller and a buyer that determines that both parties must fulfil their obligations in this contract. It also makes assurances that complying with the obligations of this promise and sacrificing in order to maintain it is the supreme triumph. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

Say: 'If your fathers, and your sons, and your brothers, and your wives, and your clan, and the possessions which you have acquired, and merchandise for which you fear there may be no sale, and dwellings which you love, are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and struggling in His way, then wait until God brings about His command. And God does not guide the wicked folk'. (Al-Tawbah, 9:24)

This verse encompasses all the sources from which cowardice and weakness usually emanate. It asks the believers to sacrifice them all in the way of God and what is right for the sake of goodness and happiness. For neither fathers, sons, brothers, spouses or clans, properties paid for with

comfort and happiness, fear of losing trade, well-loved dwellings; none of these things, should come between the believer and the sacrifices and struggle that the love for God and His Messenger require. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

The [true] believers are only those who believe in God and His Messenger, and then have not doubted, and who strive with their wealth and their souls for the cause of God. It is they who are sincere. (Al-Hujurat, 49:15)

True faith is a creed rooted in the belief in God and His Messenger (PBUH) and it rises above doubt and uncertainty and requires the exertion of one's life and property in the struggle in the way of God. In this powerful manner, instances of which the Holy Qur'an is replete, God fights the factors of weakness and the tendencies for fear. Moreover, God instils in the souls of the Ummah (the Muslim community) the ethics of courage, sacrifice and contempt for the vanities of this world in the way of truth, justice and victory.

Just as the Holy Qur'an seeks to instil these ethics in the souls of the Ummah in general in order to create men strong in spirit and heart, it strives specifically to instil these ethics in the souls of those who struggle (*mujahidin*). God says in the Holy Qur'an about those who struggle and have attained victory and success in the past:

'How often a little company has overcome a numerous one, by God's leave; and God is with the patient'. {249} So, when they went forth against Goliath and his troops, they said, 'Our Lord, pour out upon us patience, and make firm our feet, and grant us victory over the disbelieving folk!' {250} And they routed them, by the leave of God, and David slew Goliath; and God gave him the kingship and Wisdom, and He taught him such as He willed… {251} (Al-Baqarah, 2:249–251)

And God addresses the Prophet (PBUH) and reminds him of his role in encouraging the *mujahidin* to be strong and steadfast, and in reassuring them of God's support:

When you were saying to the believers, 'Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should reinforce you with three thousand angels sent down? {124} Yea, if you are patient and fear, and they come against you instantly, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand angels accoutred'. {125} What God ordained was only as a good tiding to you and that your hearts might be at peace. Victory comes only from God, the Mighty, the Wise. {126} (Aal-Imran, 3:124-126)

God also says:

Faint not, neither grieve, for you shall prevail if you are believers. {139} If a wound touches you, a like wound already has touched the other people. Such days We deal out in turn among mankind, and that God may know those who believe; and that He may take witnesses from among you, and God loves not the evildoers. {140} And that God may prove the believers, and efface the disbelievers. {141} Or did you suppose you should enter Paradise without God knowing, who among you have struggled and who are patient. {142} (Aal-Imran, 3:139-142)

These verses alleviate what befalls the believers in the way of God and guide them that faith in God makes them an unyielding force and resolutely determined. The verses also reveal that God's Sunnah in combat is that He grants success alternately to both parties, but the ultimate victory belongs to those who are patient.

Be not faint in seeking the enemy; if you are suffering, they are also suffering as you are suffering; and you hope from God that for which they cannot hope. God is ever Knower, Wise. (Al-Nisa', 4:104)

This is a little of what may be said regarding the Holy Qur'an reinforcing the morale of the Ummah in general and those who struggle (*mujahidin*) in particular.

Regarding the second element, the preparation of material force; the Holy Qur'an says:

> *Make ready for them whatever force you can and of horses tethered that thereby you may dismay the enemy of God and your enemy … (Al-Anfal, 8:60)*

And:

> *The disbelievers wish that you should be heedless of your weapons and your baggage that they may descend upon you all at once. (Al-Nisa', 4:102)*

The first verse points out two critical things in the life of nations: force (*quwwah*) and assembling and harnessing (*ribat*). Force (*quwwah*) covers numbers and equipment and is a word that encompasses all that is known, and has ever been known, about the machines of war, transportation and provisions. The word *ribat* encompasses all that is known, and has ever been known, about reinforcing posts and closing breaches and entryways that an enemy may use. The verse also explains the benefit of being prepared even in times of peace and stability, a state that instils fear in the hearts of enemies so that they are not tempted to take advantage of chinks in the armour. The second verse points out that one has to be on one's guard and be cautious lest an enemy attack unexpectedly.

What the Holy Qur'an says about the benefits of iron and manufacturing:

To discuss this we should study the twenty-fifth verse of *Surat Al-Hadid*. The verse is sublime and draws attention to the force that can be derived from iron when believers need to hold on to their rights. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

> *We have verily sent Our messengers with clear signs, and We revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance, so that mankind may uphold justice. And We sent down iron, wherein is great might, and [many] uses for mankind, and so that God may know those who help Him and His messengers through the Unseen. Assuredly God is Strong, Mighty. (Al-Hadid, 57:25)*

Consider the marriage of scripture, balance and iron in the verse; all of which were sent by God. Consider also that iron upholds the balance and preserves justice and is described as having great might and many uses. Also contemplate what the implements of combat at sea, on land and in the air are made of; is iron not utilized in all of these implements? Then reflect on the words that follow ﴿ … *and so that God may know those who help Him and His messengers through the Unseen…* ﴾; to understand that God's help is assured to those who utilize iron for might and strength.

Muslims should recognize the value of God's favour in providing them and all mankind with iron, which He sent

down. They should also recognize the favour God bestowed upon the Prophet Dawood (David) (PBUH) when He inspired him regarding the ways this material may be used. God tells us this story in the Holy Qur'an so that it may be a lesson and a reminder to us:

> *And verily We bestowed on David a [great] favour from Us: 'O mountains, repeat with him [in praise], and the birds [too]!' And We made iron malleable for him. {10} 'Fashion long coats of mail and measure [well] the links'. And act righteously. Indeed I am Seer of what you do. {11} (Saba', 34:10–11)*

Then read about the favour God bestowed on Sulayman (Solomon) (PBUH) in verses 12 and 13 of the same *Surah*:

> *And unto Solomon [We gave] the wind, its morning course was a month's journey and its evening course was a month's journey. And We caused a fount of [molten] copper to flow for him. And of the jinn [there] were those who worked before him by the leave of his Lord. And such of them as deviated from Our command, We would make them taste the chastisement of the Blaze. {12} They fashioned for him whatever he wished: lofty shrines, and statues, and basins like cisterns, and cauldrons built into the ground. 'Work, House of David in thankfulness. And few indeed of My servants are thankful'. {13} (Saba', 34:12-13)*

God also says in the Holy Qur'an:

And We bestowed on David, Solomon — what an excellent servant! Truly he was a penitent [soul]. {30} *When one evening there were displayed before him the prancing steeds.* {31} *And he said: Lo! I have preferred the good things (of the world) over the remembrance of my Lord; till they were taken out of sight behind the curtain.* {32} *"Bring them back to me." then began he to pass his hand over (their) legs and their necks.* {33} *(Sad, 38:30–33)*

It behoves us to consider Al-Razi's exegesis of these verses so that we may understand that harnessing cavalry (*ribat*) is an ancient custom adopted by even the oldest civilizations and those with the best equipment and the strongest ideas. Al-Razi says:

> The use of cavalry (*ribat al-khayl*) was recommended in their religion, just as it is in the religion of Muhammad (PBUH). Once Sulayman (PBUH) had to go on a raid; he sat and ordered that galloping horses be brought. He then said: "I do not love them because of worldly good things or personal profit, I love them because of God's orders and in pursuit of strengthening His religion"; this is what is meant by: ﴾ *... over the remembrance of my Lord...* ﴿ Then Sulayman (PBUH) ordered that the horses be put into a gallop until they

disappear behind the night's veil, i.e. until they leave his sight. He then ordered the horse trainers to bring the horses back to him. When the horses returned, he began to stroke their legs and necks. The purpose of this stroking was as follows: 1. To honour the horses and to show how precious they are, as they are among the greatest agents that assist in repelling the enemy; 2. To show that in administering policy and in kingship he was so humble that he himself carried out even the lowest duties; 3. He was an expert in horses, their diseases and their defects; he was examining them and stroking their legs and necks to learn if there were any symptoms of disease.

Regarding industries and their usefulness to nations, God says to his Prophet Noah (PBUH) in the 37th verse of *Surat Hud*: ﴿ *Build the Ark under Our eyes and by Our inspiration…* ﴾. This was a lifeboat so to speak; and just as nations need lifeboats, they also need ships for defence, attack and commercial transportation and other needs required by flourishing nations. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

> *And He it is Who disposed the sea, that you may eat from it fresh meat, and bring forth from it ornaments which you wear. And you see the ships ploughing therein; and that you may seek of His bounty, and that you might be thankful. (Al-Nahl, 16:14)*

Until Muslims connect with the teachings of their religion and the instructions of their Book, and until they comprehend and observe them, they will continue to suffer, be powerless and live a life full of humiliation[5].

Regarding the third element, practical organization for combat, the Holy Qur'an discusses its general principles from numerous angles:

Regarding the reasons for exemption from military service, the Holy Qur'an says: ﴿ *As for the weak, and the sick, and those who find nothing to expend, no blame falls upon them if they remain true to God and to His Messenger…* ﴾ (*Al-Tawbah*, 9:91). Thus the Qur'an restricts the reasons for exemption from military service to weakness, which may be caused by incapacity or old age; to sickness and to the inability to expend. The Holy Qur'an does not see that reasons for exemption from military service are such as the ones considered in our times of frailty and degeneration; such as being a university degree holder, or a university student, or that one is a *hafiz* of the Qur'an (someone who has memorized the Holy Qur'an in its entirety), or that one has paid a financial compensation, or that one is the son of a person in authority, be he great or small. In the days of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and in the following era, the situation was quite the opposite. Indeed the idea of compiling the Holy Qur'an came about because of fears that it would be lost with the death of the reciters (*qurra'*) of the Qur'an, for they were the most audacious and intrepid fighters in the War of Al-Yamamah. It was because of their audacity and

boldness in storming the ranks of the enemy that so many of them were killed.

Regarding declaration of war, the Holy Qur'an makes it a duty and warns against attacking an enemy unawares. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

And if you fear, from any folk some treachery, then cast it back to them with fairness. Truly God does not love the treacherous. (Al-Anfal, 8:58)

This verse commands that if there is fear that a party will be treacherous, any pact that has been made with them may be broken and cast back to them. The verse also asks that this be done in an explicit and clear manner lest the Muslims commit treachery, which God does not love and does not approve of.

Regarding meeting the call to jihad, the Holy Qur'an warns against tardiness and behaving as though it were a burden. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

O you who believe, what is wrong with you that, when it is said to you, 'Go forth in the way of God', you sink down heavily to the ground. Are you so content with the life of this world, rather than with the Hereafter? Yet the enjoyment of the life of this world is in the Hereafter but little. {38} If you do not go forth, He will chastise you with a painful chastisement, and He will substitute [you with] another folk

other than you, and you will not hurt Him at all; for God has power over all things. {39} *(Al-Tawbah, 9:38–39)*

These verses warn that if we are tardy in meeting the call to jihad, we will suffer painful chastisement, humiliation, substitution and the transfer of power and authority to another people.

Regarding purging the army of elements of sedition and betrayal, the Holy Qur'an says:

Had they gone forth among you, they would only have caused you more trouble, and would have hurried to and fro among you, seeking to stir up sedition between you; and among you there are some who would listen to them; and God knows the evildoers. {47} *Indeed, they sought to stir up sedition already before, and scrutinised your affairs until the truth, came, and God's command prevailed, they still being averse.* {48} *And there are some of them who say, 'Grant me leave, and do not lead me into temptation'. Surely they have [already] fallen into temptation! And surely Hell shall encompass the disbelievers.* {49} *If good fortune befalls you, it vexes them; but if an affliction befalls you, they say, 'We took our precaution before'; and they turn away, rejoicing.* {50} *(Al-Tawbah, 9:47–50)*

And:

If they could find a shelter, or some caverns, or any place to enter, they would turn and bolt away to it. (Al-Tawbah, 9:57)

And:

So if God brings you back to a party of them, and they ask leave of you to go forth, say: 'You shall never more go forth with me, and you shall never fight with me against an enemy. You were content to stay behind the first time, so stay behind with those who stay behind'. (Al-Tawbah, 9:83)

And also:

They will swear to you, that you may be satisfied with them; but if you are satisfied with them, God will surely not be satisfied with the wicked folk. (Al-Tawbah, 9:96)

Consider the verses revealed in connection with *Ghazwat* Tabuk in *Surat Al-Tawbah*. The verses describe to us the characteristics of bad soldiering. They also warn us what we need to be on our guard about during mobilization and preparation of a strong and loyal army that will be victorious. Then consider the following verses from *Surat Al-Ahzab*:

And when the hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is sickness were saying, 'What God

and His Messenger promised us was [nothing] but delusion'. {12} And when a party of them said, 'O people of Yathrib! there is not a stand [possible] for you [here], so turn back. And a group of them [even] sought the permission of the Prophet, saying, 'Our homes are exposed', although they were not exposed. They only sought to flee. {13} And had they been invaded in it from all sides and had they been exhorted to treachery, they would have committed it and would have hesitated thereupon but a little. {14} Though they had assuredly pledged to God before that, that they would not turn their backs [to flee]; and a pledge given to God must be answered for. {15} Say: 'Flight will not avail you should you flee from death or [from] being slain, and then you would not be extended comfort, except a little'. {16} Say: 'Who is it that can protect you from God should He desire [to cause] you ill, or should He desire for you mercy?' And they shall not find for themselves besides God any protector or helper. {17} Indeed God already knows the hinderers among you and those who say to their brethren, 'Come to us', and they do not engage in the battle except a little, {18} grudging to you. And when there is a panic, you see them looking at you, their eyes rolling like one fainting at death, but when the panic subsides, they scald you, with [their] sharp tongues, in their greed for the riches. Those, they never believed. Therefore God has invalidated their works, and that is easy for

God. {19} They suppose that the confederates have not [yet] departed, and were the confederates to come, they would wish that they were in the desert with the Bedouins asking about your news. And if they were among you, they would fight but a little. {20} (Al-Ahzab, 33:12–20)

These verses increase our knowledge of the characteristics of hinderers and deserters.

Regarding the mobilization of an army, the Holy Qur'an indicates that mobilization should be in proportion to need. If necessity calls for everybody to take part, then everybody must take part; if partial participation will do, then it is sufficient for only some to take part and for the rest to continue their normal internal activities and serve as reserve troops for the army. This principle is based on what God says in the Holy Qur'an:

It is not for the believers to go forth altogether: why should not a party of every section of them go forth so that they may become learned in religion and that they may warn their folk when they return to them, so that they may beware? (Al-Tawbah, 9:122)

And:

O you who believe, take your precautions, then move forward in companies, or move forward all

together. (Al-Nisa', 4:71)

Regarding the organization of the army and the distribution of its units over the positions of defence, consider what the Prophet (PBUH) did as related in the following Qur'anic verse:

And when you went forth at dawn from your family to assign the believers their places for battle... (Aal-Imran, 3:121)

Then consider this verse:

Indeed God loves those who fight for His cause in ranks, as if they were a solid structure. (Al-Saff, 61:4)

Regarding obedience to the supreme command, steadfastness, avoidance of the causes of failure and holding fast to faith and certainty, the Holy Qur'an says:

O you who believe, when you meet a host, then stand firm and remember God much, that you may succeed. {45} And obey God and His Messenger, and do not quarrel with one another, lest you falter and your strength fade; and be patient. Surely God is with the patient. {46} (Al-Anfal, 8:45–46)

Regarding flight from battle and its consequences, the

Holy Qur'an says:

> *O you who believe, when you encounter the disbelievers inching forward, do not turn your backs to them. {15} Whoever turns his back to them on that day, unless manœuvring for battle or joining another detachment, he has truly incurred the wrath of God, and his abode will be Hell — an evil journey's end! {16} (Al-Anfal, 8:15–16)*

Regarding the order in which multiple enemies should be attacked, the Holy Qur'an instructs that they should be attacked according to proximity with the nearest being first so as to clear the path for the army from any obstacles the enemy may have placed. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

> *O you who believe, fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that God is with the pious. (Al-Tawbah, 9:123)*

Regarding military secrets, the Holy Qur'an warns against divulging them and determines that broadcasting them is a characteristic of hypocrites. It also prescribes that any secrets should be taken to the supreme command and that believers should verify news before they rely on it and act on it. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

If the hypocrites do not desist, and likewise those in whose hearts is a sickness, as well as the scare-mongers in the city, assuredly We will urge you [to take action] against them, then they will not be your neighbours in it except for a little [while]. (Al-Ahzab, 33:60)

And:

O you who believe, do not betray God and the Messenger and betray your trusts while you are aware. (Al-Anfal, 8:27)

And:

And when there comes to them an issue, be it of security, or of fear, they broadcast it. If they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them; those among them who are able to think it out, would have known it from them … (Al-Nisa', 4:83)

And:

O you who believe, if a reprobate should come to you with some tiding, verify [it], lest you injure a folk out of ignorance; and then become remorseful of what you have perpetrated. (Al-Hujurat, 49:6)

Regarding truce and peace treaties, the Holy Qur'an orders us to heed calls for peace and the termination of war if the enemy is so inclined and if the enemy shows signs of sincerity and fidelity. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

And if they incline to peace, then incline to it, and rely on God; truly He is the Hearer, the Knower. {61} *And if they desire to trick you, then God is sufficient for you. He it is Who strengthened you with His help and with the believers.* {62} *(Al-Anfal, 8:61–62)*

Regarding taking prisoners and the treatment of POWs, the Holy Qur'an says:

It is not for any Prophet to have prisoners until he make wide slaughter in the land … (Al-Anfal, 8:67)

If the Imam decimates the enemy and takes prisoners, he may choose between liberating them without ransom and in return for nothing or liberating them in exchange for money or POWs. The choice should be made based on the common good. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

So when you encounter [in battle] those who disbelieve, then [attack them with] a striking of the necks. Then, when you have made thoroughly decimated them, bind. Thereafter either [set them free] by

grace or by ransom, until the war lay down its burdens … (Muhammad, 47:4)

Regarding treaties and honouring them, the Holy Qur'an commands the honouring of treaties and forbids violating them. It teaches that the intention behind treaties is for security and peace to reign instead of disorder and war. It warns against using treaties as an artful means to deprive the other party of its rights or to oppress the weak. Consider God's words in the Holy Qur'an:

And fulfil God's covenant when you made a covenant, and do not break [your] oaths after pledging them and having made God surety over you. Truly God knows what you do. {91} And do not be like her who undoes her yarn after having made it strong, [breaking it up] into fibres by making your oaths a [means of] deceit, between you, so that one group may become more numerous than [another] group… {92} (Al-Nahl,16:91–92)[6]

If the Imam determines that Muslims will come to harm as a result of a treaty, and that the harm exceeds the advantages to be gained by observing it, he is obliged to reject it. This rejection must be declared openly. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

A proclamation from God and His Messenger to mankind on the day of the Greater Pilgrimage

that God is free from obligation to the idolaters, and [so is] His Messenger... (Al-Tawbah, 9:3)

These are the principles we were able to derive from the Holy Qur'an concerning the practical aspects of combat. The Holy Qur'an is an inexhaustible treasure, when we investigate its significations and examine its meanings, we will always arrive at something new. The best aid for the understanding of the Holy Qur'an is the observation of current events and historical facts, for they are the best interpreters and the clearest road to comprehension of its purposes and its principles. If one studies what the Holy Qur'an relates concerning the military activities of the Prophet (PBUH), one grasps many of these purposes and principles which will strengthen the faith of the believers that the Holy Qur'an is a revelation by the Omnipotent and Omniscient Creator who is cognizant of the intentions of our souls.

The Practical Application of the Qur'anic Rules of Combat

In this epilogue we shall present the practical application of the principles expounded by the Holy Qur'an regarding combat during the time of the Prophet (PBUH) and his two Successors (Caliphs), Abu Bakr and Omar. After this period the Muslims were afflicted by internal and external affairs that prevented them from observing God's prescriptions and laws. These affairs also compelled them, especially where combat was concerned, to adopt practices of a much wider range than those which God had prescribed for jihad in His way.

The phases of the Prophet's life and the lives of the believers who were with him before combat began are due to:

The clandestine call (*da'wah*) which a small group of people believed in. They were bound to the Prophet by close family ties or friendship which revealed to them the sublime spirit and magnificent nature of the Prophet.

The public call (*da'wah*) directed to his clan and then to all mankind.

The temptations that the Meccans tried to seduce the Prophet (PBUH) with, offering him as much property, power and sovereignty as he wished in exchange for him to desist from propagating the call (*da'wah*).

The violence and oppression which the Prophet and his

companions suffered. History has recorded blood-chilling instances of torture.

The Emigration (*hijrah*) to Abyssinia in order to save Islam and preserve lives.

The malefactions, maliciousness and conspiracies against the Prophet, the Muslims and even against all the descendents of Abd Munaf in order to prompt the latter to deliver the Prophet and his companions, and not to protect them from the aggression of the Polytheists. One of these instances was the boycotting of Abu Talib and his people, which – were it not for the Grace of God – nearly broke their spirit of resistance.

Seeking refuge in Al-Ta'if and seeking the help of Thaqeef who met the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions with mockery and derision and drove them away.

The Emigration (*hijrah*) to Medina which was facilitated by delegations that had visited the Prophet and by the pains taken by him to call the tribes to Islam. Both factors helped the spread of the noble calling of Islam and gain supporters among the Medinan youth who promised the Messenger (PBUH) that they would propagate and protect the call to Islam until death. One of the consequences of this Emigration was that the fury and rancour of the polytheists increased as the opportunity to assassinate the Prophet passed them by.

The role of the enmity between the Muslims and the Jews in Medina. As soon as the Prophet settled in Medina it became clear to him that the Jews there denied his call and plotted against him and his Companions. The Prophet

(PBUH) had thought that the Jews would be his closest supporters because they were People of the Book and because they had previously asked for his assistance in their wars against the Polytheists. This induced the Prophet (PBUH) to extend his hand to them in order to prevent sedition and strife and he concluded a treaty with them that left them to their religion. After concluding this treaty, the Prophet felt more secure and turned his attention to his original enemies who, after his Emigration, were attacking his followers at every turn. His followers could not emigrate for financial reasons and their enemies waited for opportunities to oppose the call to Islam and scatter its adherents.

The harassment that the Prophet and his Companions faced at the hands of their enemies. The Prophet (PBUH) foresaw that unless he propagated his call to Islam in Medina, which was the task entrusted to him by God, then the Meccans would inevitably find a way to penetrate Medina and attack him by surprise, especially since the Jews with whom he had concluded a treaty were not to be trusted to keep their pledge. It was not improbable that the Medinan Jews would open up opportunities in Medina for the enemy outside and that they would subsequently join forces with them in order to expel the believers from Medina, just as they had been expelled from Mecca.

For all these reasons the Prophet and his Companions prepared to resist those who opposed the call to Islam; the people of Mecca. The Prophet engaged in skirmishes with them and displayed his strength and determination

to continue with his call and strive for its propagation and protection and indeed to save the meek men, women and children who say as is related in the Holy Qur'an:

> *... 'Our Lord, bring us forth from this town whose people are evildoers and appoint for us a protector from You, and appoint for us from You a helper'. (Al-Nisa', 4:75)*

It was in this spirit that combat between the believers and the polytheists began and battles between both parties took place; some of which are related in the Holy Qur'an. And God crowned all these confrontations with conquest and clear victory.

The Jews broke their pledge; they were not able to purify their hearts from rancour and envy. God's continuous favours to His Prophet and his faithful Companions kindled the fire of antagonism in the hearts of the Jews until it induced them to break the pledges they had concluded with the Prophet. This was done by Banu Qaynuqaa, Banu Al-Nadheer and Banu Quraytha. They insulted the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers at a time when the Prophet needed to keep enemies and battles at a minimum. But this was God's will and the Muslims had no choice but to reject the pledge they had with the Jews and after a phase of peace and treaties, enter a new phase in their relations with them, a phase of hostility and war.

These were the phases that the Prophet (PBUH) went

through, before and after the Emigration. From this it becomes clear to us that the polytheists of Mecca fought the Prophet since the start of his Mission. They were the first to commit aggression, chased the believers from their homes, tyrannized the meek and subjected them to all kinds of maltreatment and torture. It is also clear that the Jews of Medina were only attacked by the Messenger after they had broken their pledge to him and aggressed against him as the polytheists had done before.

It is also evident that the Prophet only fought those who fought him, and he only fought to end sedition in religion and to stave off and respond to aggression and violence. These are exactly the prescriptions for combat (*qitaal*) revealed in the Holy Qur'an, as we have discussed.

The wars that took place after the death of the Prophet were conducted by Abu Bakr and Omar and they were a continuation of something for which the groundwork had been laid by the Byzantines (*Al-Rum*) and the Persians (*Al-Furs*) during the Prophet's lifetime. The first two Caliphs had no choice but to fend off evil and enable people to hear the call to Islam and to safeguard the security of the Muslims with regard to their religion and their homes.

As a Prophet and a Messenger of God, Muhammad, called the kings of the Byzantines and the Persians to Islam. To the King of the Byzantines he dispatched his famous missive in which he called him to Islam and held him, in the event of his refusal, answerable for the injustice he inflicted on his own people by keeping them from Islam. When the

letter was translated for the King of the Byzantines, he assembled his patriarchs and high officials, submitted the letter to them and asked for their advice as to whether or not he should accept the summons. They turned stubbornly away and expressed resentment towards his attitude. The King of the Byzantines appeased them by saying: "I only said what I said to test your resolve concerning religion and kingship." So the King of the Byzantines abandoned his original intention, preferring kingship over Islam. Then the Byzantine high officials and patriarchs began to sow the venomous seeds of hatred against Islam and its Prophet in the hearts of commanders and subordinates. One of the consequences was that when Shurhabil Al-Ghassani met the Prophet's envoy to the Prince of Basra at the Battle of Mu'tah, Al-Ghassani gave orders to behead him. The Byzantines surmised that the Muslims would not tolerate such an attack on their honour. They therefore intensified their state of alert and assembled a force of Byzantines and Christian Arabs in an attempt to annihilate the Prophet (PBUH). When the Messenger of God heard about this, he prepared an army to confront those who rose against him and mocked his call to Islam. As soon as this army reached the place where the Muslim envoy had been killed, they found the Byzantine troops in a state of high alert. The two armies clashed and fought a fierce battle. Three Muslim heroes were killed and had it not been for a stratagem that God disclosed to Khalid ibn Al-Walid, not a single soldier in the Muslim army would have survived. There were continuous reports that the Byzantines were as-

sembling troops against the Muslims, determined to attack them. The Prophet prepared himself and set out with an army before they could attack him in his own land. When he reached Tabuk, he found that they had abandoned their plan. The Prophet remained there a few days, during which some princes concluded peace treaties with him. He then returned to Medina, thinking about those who had lost because of Khalid ibn Al-Walid's stratagem and assuming that they would definitely fight back. Therefore, he equipped an army under the command of Usama ibn Zayd. Immediately after this army had set out, the Prophet (PBUH) died and was succeeded by Abu Bakr who took over command of the Muslims. Abu Bakr was of the opinion that firmness, loyalty and wisdom required that he dispatch the army that the Prophet had assembled to counter the danger of the aggressors. This was followed by a rapid succession of wars between the Muslims and the Byzantines until the Muslims conquered their lands and enabled their people to find Islam.

The spirit of hostility displayed by the Byzantines was matched by the Persians, who were even more arrogant and powerful. For when the Prophet sent a missive to Kosrau (Kisra), the latter tore it to pieces and cast it on the floor. Indeed so haughty and arrogant was Kosrau that he sent word to his governor in Yemen to send two strongmen to the Prophet Muhammad to bring him to Kosrau. They actually reached the Prophet and informed him of the mission they had been tasked with. The Messenger then said: "*This day Khosrau will be killed*." Once the two men learned that the

words of the Prophet had come true, they became Muslims. Their conversion caused the conversion to Islam of the governor of Yemen. Following this, Bahrain and Oman – countries that were under Persian protection – became Muslim.

The Persians thought that the victory of the Muslims over the Byzantines was only due to the weakness of the Byzantine armies. The Persians began to attack their neighbouring Arab tribes, employing the kings of Al-Heerah who attacked the Muslims forcefully. The Muslim army then marched to meet them and war broke out until the proxy of the Persians had to flee to Al-Mada'in and the kings of Al-Heerah surrendered to the Muslims. This ignited hatred for the Muslims in the hearts of the Persians; they recalled their might and equipped an army to expel the Muslims from their lands. Fighting broke out and in the end the Muslims advanced to the lands of the Persians. Khosrau's throne fell and all the Persian lands yielded to the Muslims.

From this brief description it will be clear that, in the first period, the Muslims only attacked people after they had shown hostility and opposition to the call (*da'wah*). It also shows that when such hostility became manifest and once the Muslims were convinced of its danger to themselves and to the call to Islam, they hastened to put out its fire and eliminate it before it became pervasive. The Muslims did not wait for their enemies to attack them in their own lands. This is in accordance with a natural and instinctive sociological rule: "When people are attacked in their own home, they are inevitably humiliated." Nevertheless, according to Islamic

prescriptions, whenever the Muslims arrived in the land of an enemy whose hostility to them was evident, they let him choose one of three things: conversion to Islam, poll-tax (*jizyah*) or combat (*qitaal*). These choices were offered in the hope that the enemy would come to his senses, look into his heart and replace aggression and antagonism with wisdom. The Prophet (PBUH) enjoined the commanders of his army: "*If you meet your polytheist enemy, call on him to choose one of three things*." This shows us that the enemy's spirit of animosity preceded the dispatching of the Muslim army and that offering him choices was done in the hope for peace and the abandonment of hostility. It is also clear that the wars that the Muslims fought in the first period of Islam were not aimed at forcing people to convert to Islam, nor at subjugating or humiliating them, neither were they prompted by greed for money or greater power.

We should also recall the Qur'anic prescriptions regarding our behaviour with, and treatment of, *dhimmis*, who are not adherents of Islam. One must also read how the Rightly Guided Caliphs and the righteous army commanders dealt with those who were not adherents of Islam. Then we can learn, based on reason and evidence not supposition and conjecture, how lenient and magnanimous Islam is in the treatment of its non-Muslim subjects and how deeply it loves universal peace and human solidarity. We can also see how exalted Islam's universal human laws are; laws that have attracted people to the faith of Islam of their own free will and under the protection of which non-Muslims have lived for

centuries, without any complaints of injustice.

After reading this, it is my fervent hope that the reader be left in no doubt that the Holy Qur'an and the life of the Prophet (PBUH) together establish a theory concerning combat which I have described in this treatise. May God guide us in spreading His laws and guidance which guarantee the dignity and honour of Muslims. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Answering.

ENDNOTES

1 What is meant by manifest coercion is coercion through physical force such as iron and fire; what is meant by surreptitious coercion is perceptible miracles to which one submits.

2 This is different from his responsibility, and that of the Caliphs who followed him, to carry out God's Shari'ah within the Ummah (Muslim community).

3 The *jizyah* is not, as some think, a sum paid in exchange for life or the right to refuse conversion to Islam. It is, as we have said, a symbol that signifies yielding, the desistance from warfare and impeding the *da'wah* and a token of participation in the affairs of the state in return for the protection of life and property. On page 35 of *Kitab Al-Kharaj*, Abu Yusuf writes: "After Abu Ubaydah concluded a peace treaty with the people of Syria and had collected from them the *jizyah* and the tax for agrarian land (*kharaj*), he was informed that the Romans were readying for battle against

him and that the situation had become critical for him and the Muslims. Abu Ubaydah then wrote to the governors of the cities with whom pacts had been concluded that they must return the sums collected from *jizyah* and *kharaj* and say to their subjects: 'We return to you your money because we have been informed that troops are being raised against us. In our agreement you stipulated that we protect you, but we are unable to do so. Therefore, we now return to you what we have taken from you, and we will abide by the stipulation and what has been written down, if God grants us victory over them.'"

4 Some people whose intent is to disparage Islam do not go beyond a superficial interpretation of the verse: ﴾ *... fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you...* ﴿. They claim that Islam orders Muslims to fight unbelievers in general until they convert to Islam whether they commit aggression or not. They also claim that Islamic Law (Shari'ah) decrees this. The truth is that what is meant by the word "disbelievers" in this verse and others is the warring polytheists who fought the Muslims, aggressed against them, expelled them from their homes, took their property and spread sedition among people regarding their faith. The morals of these polytheists have been described in the opening verses of *Surat Al-Tawbah*.

Further, what is meant by the word "people" in the Hadith: "*I have been ordered to fight the people...*" should be understood in the same vein. For according to consensus (*ijma'*) on this Hadith, warfare must cease if the enemies are Arab polytheists. As for other enemies, the war against them must cease on the condition that they ﴾ *... pay the jizyah tribute, readily being subdued* ﴿. Thus,

these verses are in agreement and there is no contradiction between the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith and the aforementioned false allegation is dropped.

5 Since the preparation of force depends on money, many verses urge the spending of money in the way of God, e.g. (*Al-Anfal*, 8:60): ﴾ *... And whatever thing you expend in the way of God shall be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged.* ﴿ What is meant here is that it shall be repaid in full by means of concentrating your force in your country and conquering the countries of your enemies. God also says in the Holy Qur'an: ﴾ *And spend in the way of God; and cast not your own hands into destruction...* ﴿ (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:195); destruction here refers to destruction by being stingy and parsimonious when it comes to national defence.

6 These verses warn against violating treaties or conducting them in a manner in which one or both parties are not left feeling secure. The verses also warn against remaining under the mercy of a power that does not know peace or justice. They also warn against using treaties as an artful means to take advantage of the weak, who are compelled by circumstances to consent to them. History has proven that treaties conducted under these circumstances are ultimately corrupt and end badly. God says in the Holy Qur'an: ﴾ *And do not make your oaths a [means of] deceit between you lest a foot should slip after being steady, and [lest] you should taste evil, forasmuch as you barred [people] from the way of God, and there be a tremendous chastisement for you.* ﴿ (*Al-Nahl*: 16:94). Compare then the teachings of these verses with the treaties conducted by modem nations which have ended up being disastrous to the world.

About the Author

Imam Mahmoud Shaltut was born in 1893 and was a great Egyptian religious scholar, jurist, Qur'anic exegete and reformer. He was appointed by Gamal Abdel-Nasser to the prestigious position of Grand Imam of Al-Azhar at a key time in Egyptian history, from 1958 until Sheikh Shaltut's death in 1963. As Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Shaltut's reforms focused on the separation of the state and religious institutions, particularly Al-Azhar. He also dedicated himself to showing the world that Islamic Shari'ah Law is not at odds with modern society and that it is a guiding light through the changes and challenges of contemporary life. Sheikh Shaltut was a powerful orator and his finely honed communication skills extended to his writing, particularly his Qur'anic exegesis. His writings are known for their straightforward language, eloquence and accessibility to the layperson. Sheikh Shaltut strove to combat sectarianism in Islam and encouraged harmony in the interactions between Sunnis and Shiites. Imam Shaltut will always be remembered for his efforts to show the world that Islam is a religion of unity, flexibility, moderation and reason.